

**Missouri Department of Social Services**  
**Division of Family Services**  
**Section 5 – Chafee Foster Care Independence Program**  
**FY 2003 Update to CFCIP State Plan**

The Missouri Department of Social Services, will administer, supervise or oversee the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program under sections 471, 472, 474, 475, and 477 in Title IV-E of the Social Security Act; Title I, Improved Independent Living Program, Public Law 106-169, Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. Missouri's Division Family Services is responsible directly to the Department of Social Services regarding service delivery and expenditures.

The Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services will cooperate in national evaluations of the effects of the programs implemented to achieve its purposes as required under section 477 (b)(2)(F).

The Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services makes every effort to involve youth in the planning, developing, and in making decisions that affect their life. Youth are recognized and valued for their strengths and diversity.

This report addresses articles 3 (a-h) on pages 10-11 of ACYF-CB-PI-03-05 Program Instruction dated May 23, 2003.

**a) Accomplishments and progress made toward meeting each of the program purposes.**

- Help youth make the transition to self-sufficiency.

The Division of Family Services (DFS) uses Chafee funds to staff one state level coordinator. The state level coordinator position is used to provide program coordination and management, resource development, training, administrative and budgetary oversight, technical assistance, and program and policy development.

DFS also uses Chafee funds to staff 12 Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialist positions located in the seven geographic areas continue to strengthen community partnerships with agencies and organizations to assist youth make the transition to self-sufficiency. The Specialists also work directly and collaboratively with the case managers, foster parents and other placement providers, contracted providers, and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, contractor compliance, on-going consultation and training to agency staff, foster parents, and other service providers. They provide direct services to youth in skills assessment and training on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. The Specialists also provide services through seminars, summer camps, retreats, conferences, and other group related activities.

In the State Plan for FY 2001-2004, eligibility requirements for Aftercare services necessitated the youth must have left foster care at age 18 or after, but have not yet

reached age 21. If youth left foster care prior to age 18, they were not eligible to receive Aftercare services. The eligibility requirement is being amended at the recommendation of external stakeholders and staff during various meetings held throughout the year to provide Aftercare services to youth if they were in DFS custody at age 17, but exited at 17.5 years. It is also the recommendation that DFS maintain the lifetime maximum spending limit of \$3,500.00 (excluding educational assistance) per youth, but eliminate the categorical limits. Lowering the age requirement to receive Aftercare services will assist those youth whose court's jurisdiction was terminated prematurely to receive the necessary services to better assist in their transition to self-sufficiency.

Youth who were previously in foster care for an accumulative 180 days or longer and enrolled in life skills training are subsequently returned to their home of origin, adopted, or achieved legal guardianship, are permitted to continue receiving services until they have successfully completed the life skills training.

If a youth is considered appropriate and eligible for Chafee services, a referral is made to the ILP Specialist from the youth's case manager, foster parents or other placement providers, other agencies or by self-referral. The primary assessment tool currently used for youth, ages 15-18, to determine strengths/needs is the Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills. ILP staff and *Choices* contractors designed a pre/post assessment for youth 13-15 years old. DFS is in the process of exploring the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) through training and consultation from the National Resource Center for Youth Services. The ACLSA consists of four different versions for four suggested age ranges. Its focuses on strengths and its statements about life skills are easy for the youth and his/her caretaker to understand and complete.

Youth from Area 2, 5, 6, and 7 were involved in a community partnership with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative (JCYOI). JCYOI is a national endeavor to assist youth in foster care make successful transitions to self-sufficiency and independence. JCYOI's goal is to bring together people and resources needed to assist youth make the necessary contacts they need for employment, education, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community connections. JCYOI began partnering with Missouri in December 2001 with two sites: Kansas City and the metropolitan St. Louis area. In April 2003, JCYOI withdrew their funding from the St. Louis site, due to budget cuts. DFS will continue to work with JCYOI in Kansas City to assist them in educating the communities to support foster youth and to understand the importance of involving youth in the decision making process that affects their lives. JCYOI's purpose is to accomplish three key strategies: youth leadership boards, community partnership boards, and Opportunity Passports. The Opportunity Passport is designed to organize resources and create opportunities for foster and Aftercare youth. It assists youth in accumulating assets and direct experience with money management. Youth who apply and are selected to receive a Passport will receive an individual development account (a matched savings account), a personal debit account, and a variety of available community services at preferred rates.

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (the Act) provided a broad framework for states to reform services and systems to better meet the needs of young people. This broadened the scope of "independent living" by eliminating the minimum age requirement of 16 and serving older youth who are transitioning out of or have already left foster care. Independent Living services for youth in DFS care/custody continues to move along the continuum of the informal, formal, and experiential methods needed for youth to successfully transition to living in the community. While in out-of-home care, youth are provided with life skills training, regardless of their placement or permanency plan. Life skills training is designed to assist the youth in learning the array of skills necessary to successfully transition to self-sufficiency and independence.

Research indicates that young people who spend most or all of their teenage years in foster care experience higher incidences of homelessness and unemployment. They are also at higher risk for quitting school early and becoming parents prematurely. This is evidence many youth are ill prepared for living independently by virtue of receiving too little preparation prior to their exit from foster care. Life skills learning is a life long process and we recognize the need to begin preparing youth at a younger age. Since 1998, DFS has provided services for these younger adolescents, ages 13-15 using state funds through the *Choices* program. *Choices* focused on skills training in the classroom setting on soft skills with emphasis on decision making, anger management, communication, drugs/alcohol issues, and sexual responsibility. Seminars are provided for youth to practice and accomplish some of the training learned in the classroom.

Missouri enhanced the capacity to better serve this younger population by setting aside a portion of the Chafee funding to supplement state funds to provide hands-on learning opportunities. However, due to severe budgetary constraints, funding for the *Choices* program has been eliminated by the Legislature from the state FY 04 budget. This provides DFS with an opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. We recognize the need and the importance to continue serving this younger population. A workgroup consisting of DFS staff and contractors has been working to review the current program, which focused primarily on teaching "soft skills" to younger youth in a classroom setting. We envision the development of a practical application program, which will serve youth along a continuum of services from pre-independent living, for the younger than age 16 population, to the young adults who have exited foster care and may need Aftercare services.

Independent living services are adapted in each area of the state in order to meet the individual needs of its population. Life skills classes vary in length of time from six to nine months of instruction to include speakers, videos, group discussion, hands-on activities, and practical applications. The classes meet once per week for two to two and one half hours. Expedited classes are offered for youth in a residential group setting that generally lasts 3-4 months. Expedited classes meet usually meet twice per week for two hours. The youth receive a small stipend and other incentives for attending group sessions and completing assigned homework. The opportunity to practice what youth learn in the classroom include participation in field trips, summer camps, weekend retreats, day seminars and community service. It is possible to arrange for individualized

instruction on an as needed basis. These services are designed to provide the daily care, education, training and supports necessary to assist youth in maintaining stable and permanent living situations as they exit foster care and transition to self-sufficiency and independence.

Youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 shall be enrolled in an age appropriate Chafee service. Youth shall be provided information on available Chafee services by their case manager, life skills class facilitator, and/or the ILP Specialist. Services shall be used to assist youth to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure the program participants recognize and accept personal responsibility in their preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Youth shall also be involved in their permanency planning and understand their accountability in attaining their goals.

- **Help youth receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment.**

Education should be approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner in the early years. The process should begin early with ongoing encouragement and support for higher education and making the education plan part of the permanency plan. All youth should have a minimum of a GED as an overall goal. Many efforts were made to help youth gain job training and work experience. Twenty-two youth were selected statewide to participate in the training on Microsoft Office Application Software. DFS staff including case managers and ILP Specialists referred youth to Job Corps, Americorps, and all branches of the military. Youth received job training, job mentoring and placement, and social support. Various community members representing their professions were used as guest speakers and to assist youth with mock interviewing. Many graduates of life skills training return to the program to serve as paid graduate assistants, interns, class co-facilitators, office assistant and serve as tutors, mentors, and chaperones in activities with younger foster children.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides funding to ten community partnerships to implement structured work site and community-based mentoring. When youth are referred they must complete a 20-30 hours (based on the youth's learning capacity) job readiness training. The curriculum focuses on "soft skills" training, resume preparation and mock interviewing. Once the youth passes the job readiness training, they can begin their job search and then a job mentor is assigned.

- **Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions.**

Education is approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Early and on-going support for higher education or vocational training is extremely important in preparing youth for self-sufficiency, reliance and independence. Setting and monitoring educational goals has assisted youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. All youth are required to be enrolled high school, post-secondary

education or training program while in DFS custody. All youth are encouraged to have a minimum of GED as their overall goal. Graduation from high school is preferred and acknowledged as an important milestone in their lives. In an effort to recognize such a noteworthy endeavor, foster youth graduating from high school may apply to receive up to a \$200.00 incentive to be used toward graduation announcements, senior portraits, a class ring or other graduation expenses.

Any foster and former foster youth who has a high school diploma or GED, is interested in pursuing higher education or post-secondary training, and is eligible for Chafee services may qualify for educational and training assistance. Resources and guidance are provided to assist youth with this challenging new phase of their life. Contractors are employed to provide services to the youth on an one to one basis or in a group setting to assist youth in choosing the best post-secondary education or training plan, completing college applications or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). A supportive network is key if youth are to succeed in the post-secondary environment.

- **Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults.**

Committed and skilled adults are essential to guide young people and help them when they are out on their own. Career or work-site role models serve a significant purpose. Through the Missouri Mentoring Partnership youth are provided the opportunity to expand their horizons and acquire self-discipline and confidence through ten structured work sites and the community mentoring project. Building a successful youth mentoring project depends on commitment. DFS believes in the importance of developing individual potential and encouraging new relationships.

Many youth have a desire to return to their biological or extended family when they leave foster care. These relationships with their biological family can become very complicated, especially when they have been in foster care for an extended time. However, we recognize the family as an importance source of support for the youth. We also acknowledge the relationships the youth will form with their foster families. These ties often continue after the youth exit foster care. Even those youth raised in residential settings often maintain continuing contact with house parents and staff for a period of time. These relationships may be critical for youth who do not have a family to return home to. A majority of the youth also form connections to their ILP Specialist or the contractor who is providing the ILP services. These natural and personal relationships are critical in the young adult's life and must be included to really make a difference in youth's lives.

- **Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age.**

Missouri has for many years provided services and support for youth between 18 and 21 years of age. While in foster care, these older youth are provided with the same services

as the younger youth. In addition, older foster youth also receive education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment, prepare for and enter post-secondary education and training.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a **safety net** to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited DFS custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the need of the former foster care youth. Chafee funds may be expended for a variety of reasons and should be used as a support for the young adult, not an on-going supplemental funding source. Aftercare services may include emergency/crisis intervention services, housing/room and board, educational/job training/employment assistance, and other support services. Room and board services may include security and utility deposits, rent, utilities, food, start-up kits, basic necessities, and basic furniture. Support services provided include life skills training, transportation, child care, clothing, and other expenses as needed. Youth may receive up to a lifetime maximum of \$3,500.00 for any one or a combination of all these categorical services during their eligibility period, excluding educational and training assistance.

- **Make available vouchers for education and training, including post-secondary training and education, to youth who have aged out of foster care.**

DFS introduced the college/vocational school tuition/books program in December 1992. The program assists foster youth with financial assistance in post-secondary educational and training assistance. A maximum expenditure of \$3,500.00 can be expended per youth, per year during the eligibility period. All youth who applied, received the tuition and book assistance. One hundred fourteen foster care and 23 Aftercare youth received tuition and book assistance to attend colleges/universities to pursue one-year training programs and two or four year degrees, totaling \$ 257,335.56, in FY 2002. When funding for the education and training vouchers becomes available, additional youth and increased funding will be afforded in subsequent years.

- b) For States that choose to establish a trust fund program for youth receiving independent living services or transition assistance, describe the design and delivery of the trust fund program (section (477(b)(2)(A)) of the Act).**

Missouri has not developed or established a trust fund program.

- c) A description of the extent to which the funds and services assisted youth ages 18-21 in making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency (section 477(a)(5)).**

Youth may continue to remain in DFS custody until age 21 if they are attending school or a job training program, and actively participate in their permanency planning. There is an array of services available and a continuum of support for foster care youth to assist them in transitioning out of care and reaching self-sufficiency. The young adults, who have left DFS custody, received the same services foster youth received, with the exception of Medicaid/medical services. The services received include: consultation, life skills training, attendance at seminars, rope courses, computer and summer camps, participated on advisory

board, educational/training assistance, job readiness and placement support, mentoring, and accessed mental health services. In addition, youth who left foster care at age 18 or after also received room and board benefits, crisis intervention and other support services. The goal of Aftercare Services is to complement the youth's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure they recognize and accept personal responsibility. In FY 2002, one hundred thirty-seven youth received Aftercare services. Many of the youth received a combination of room and board, crisis intervention, education, and support services. Fifty-three youth received assistance with paying for security and utilities deposits, rent and other room and board expenses. Nineteen youth received education and training assistance.

**d) Information on specific training that was conducted during fiscal year 2003, and will be conducted in FY 2004, in support of the goals and objectives of the States' CFCIP (section 477 (b)(3)(D)) of the Act.**

ILP Staff and advisory board youth continues to provide ongoing informational meetings and training statewide to staff, foster parents/providers, and the community concerning available Chafee services. A state youth conference was hosted and designed by the State Youth Advisory Board for approximately 240 youth, placement providers, case managers, juvenile court staff, and other community members focused on permanency planning issues, communication, stress management, adolescent behaviors, and real youth issues and concerns.

Sixty-two adults and 45 youth were also able to attend the Daniel Memorial Institutes, *2002 Growing Pains* conference, which focused on independent living issues and provided useful information on strategies taking place nationally. There were separate workshops available to youth and adults. Adult workshop topics addressed what was working and not working in the field of independent living, how to develop a program that works; and how to enlist key people to partner in providing independent living services to youth. Youth workshop topics included goal setting, youth leadership, youth rights and the law, relationships and family planning.

During FY 2003 Casey Family Programs and the National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) provided technical assistance on the Ansell/Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA). A contracted provider from Casey Family Programs introduced the ACLSA to approximately 40 ILP staff and contractors and NRCYS provide a two day training to the state ILP Coordinator and Specialists on how to use the assessment.

In FY2002 ILP staff collaborated with the Division's Staff Training and Development Unit to develop a curriculum using Casey Family Programs, *Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life skills*. The training curriculum was developed to be used to train staff and service providers to work with youth by addressing and understanding the issues that confront youth as they transition to self-sufficiency. Two counties, Buchanan and St. Louis County were chosen as the test site to pilot the training. The training was well received and the feedback provided information on the varying needs between staff and service providers. The curriculum is in the process of being adapted for staff.

ILP staff and Staff Training and Development are also collaborating on a different project to develop a statewide curriculum to be used for training of providers interesting in becoming a Transitional Living Advocate. Currently, the curriculum used differs from area to area. Advocates are required to undergo 18 hours of pre-service, specialized training on adolescent needs and issues.

DFS will continue to increase the number of trainers statewide who are available to provide life skills training and independent living training workshops and seminars on subjects to complement the topics taught in life skills training. These new trainers, current contractors and ILP staff will continue to provide informational meetings and make trainings available to DFS staff, youth and community partners.

- e) **If the CFCIP services (e.g., life skills training, tutoring and other educational assistance, housing, employment, and mental health counseling) to be provided in the upcoming fiscal year differs significantly from those which were described in the CFSP, then it is necessary to update the CFSP to reflect any additions or changes in services or program design.**

Positive changes made to better serve youth include the lowering of the age requirement from age 18 to 17.5 to receive Aftercare services, with the exception of room and board. The maximum lifetime spending limit for Aftercare services, (with the exception of education and training assistance) remains at \$3,500.00, but the categorical limits will be removed to meet more individualized needs. Youth who begins life skills training, but are returned home, are adopted, or achieved legal guardianship may continue to receive Chafee services until the service need is met or completed.

Due to the loss of state funding, the Choices Program for youth ages 13-15 has been eliminated by the Legislature. However, DFS acknowledges the need and requirements to serve youth younger than age 16. This budget deficit provides DFS with an opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. We recognize the need and the importance to continue serving this younger population. A workgroup consisting of DFS staff and contractors has been working to review the current program, which focused primarily on teaching “soft skills” to younger youth in a classroom setting. We envision a practical application program, which will serve youth along a continuum of services from pre-independent living, for the younger than age 16 population, to the young adults who have exited foster care and may need Aftercare services.

- f) **Section 477(b)(3)(G) requires States to certify that Chafee benefits and services will be made available to Indian children in the State on the same basis as to other children in the State. In the Chafee section of the APSR, please include information on the following:**

A program planning meeting consisting of stakeholders was held on April 8-9, 2003. The purpose of this consultation was to familiarize stakeholders with the Chafee program and acquaint them with Missouri’s state plan. There were opportunities for dialogue, consensus, and to continue the planning for independent living services in Missouri.



Missouri does not have federally recognized Indian tribes residing in the state. However, there are two active Indian Centers located in the Kansas City and Springfield area. Representatives from both centers were invited to attend the program planning meeting.

All benefits and services under the programs are made available to Indian youth in the state on the same basis as to other youth in the state.

**g) For States that used basis Chafee funds for education and training vouchers prior to FY 2003, as clarified in Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-02-07, describes the design and delivery of the voucher program and how much was spent on the State's voucher program.**

Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program, but values higher education as an essential component in assisting youth successfully transition into adulthood. DFS will use the new Education and Training Vouchers to enhance the current tuition and books program. Requirements for educational and training assistance will be:

- The youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a “C” average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in training program;
- The youth must be accepted to an accredited college/university and vocational school or certified training program;
- Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized;
- There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program, and;
- Youth participating in the voucher program on the date they attain age 21 shall remain eligible until they attain age 23 years of age, as long as they are enrolled in a full-time post-secondary education or training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.
- Youth adopted from foster care at age 16 can get the higher education, vocational training, and other education supports they need to become self-sufficient.
- Youth can receive up to \$5,000 per year for the cost of attending college or vocational training.

**h) A request for FY 2004 basic Chafee funds .**

Federal funds requested - \$ 3,303,069.00

\*State Match required - \$ 660,614.00

\*State sources of Match are state general revenue used for Children's Treatment Services and Residential Treatment Services.